

MOAB MASTER LEASING PLAN AND DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS/DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE MOAB AND MONTICELLO FIELD OFFICES

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Type of Action: Draft

Jurisdiction: Grand and San Juan Counties, Utah

Abstract: This Moab Master Leasing Plan and Draft Resource Management Plan Amendments/Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Moab and Monticello Field Offices (MLP/Draft EIS) has been prepared by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Canyon Country District. This document addresses the need for additional planning and analyses for considering new leasing of oil and gas and potash on about 785,000 acres of public lands within the Planning Area. The decisions from this planning process could amend the Moab and Monticello Resource Management Plans (RMPs) that were completed in 2008.

The Planning Area covers about 785,000 acres in east-central Utah, encompassing west-central Grand County south of Interstate 70 as well as a portion of northern San Juan County. The western boundary is the Green River and the northeastern edge of Canyonlands National Park. To the south of Moab, the Planning Area includes lands between Canyonlands National Park and U.S. Highway 191. The Planning Area encompasses a mix of land uses including a variety of recreation uses, potash production, oil and gas development, and livestock grazing. Interest in oil, gas, and potash exploration and development is high, as evidenced by expressions of interest to lease oil and gas on 120,000 acres within the Planning Area as well as the submission of over 170 potash prospecting permit applications encompassing over 350,000 acres. The MLP process will provide additional planning and analyses prior to new leasing of oil and gas and potash within the Planning Area.

Four management alternatives for the MLP/Draft EIS have been developed for consideration and analysis in the Draft EIS. Alternative A is a continuation of current management (No Action Alternative); oil, gas, and potash leasing and development could occur at the same time on the same tracts of land. Alternative B minimizes impacts to sensitive resources and recreational use by limiting oil and gas and potash leasing. Mineral leasing decisions are separated into Alternative B1 and Alternative B2. Alternative B1 minimizes impacts to sensitive resources by separating oil and gas leasing and development from potash leasing and development. Alternative B2 minimizes impacts to sensitive resources by only considering oil and gas leasing; no new potash leasing would occur. Alternative C emphasizes protection of sensitive resources and recreational uses over oil and gas leasing and development; no new potash leasing would occur. Alternative D is the BLM's Preferred Alternative and minimizes surface disturbance by separating oil and gas development from potash development while maximizing protection for BLM lands adjoining Arches and Canyonlands National Parks.

The outcome of the MLP process will be to identify new leasing stipulations, establish best management practices, and to specify development constraints. Changes to the leasing stipulations would require amendments to the RMPs. Comments are accepted for 90 days following the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability for this MLP/Draft EIS in the Federal Register. Comments should be submitted via mail or email. The mailing address is: Bureau of Land Management, Canyon Country District Office, Attn: MLP Comments, 82 East Dogwood, Moab, UT 84532. The email address is: blm_ut_mb_mlpcomments@blm.gov.